



"You Don't—You Don't Suspect Me of This?"

of black substance inside, closed it up, placed it against the far wall, untwisted the coil, stood back near the door and then pressed the button. The result was extraordinary. The whole of the far wall was blown out and for some distance in front the ground was furrowed up by the explosion. Quest replaced the instrument in his pocket, sprang through the opening and ran for the tower house. Behind him on its way to New York he could see a freight train coming along. He could hear, too, Red Gallagher's roar of anger. It was less than fifty yards, yet as soon as he reached the shelter of the tower the thunder of the freight sounded in Quest's ears. He glanced around. Red Gallagher and his mate were racing almost side by side towards him. He rushed up the narrow stairs into the signal room, tearing open his coat to show his official badge. "Stop the freight," he shouted to the operator. "Quick, I'm Sanford Quest, detective—special powers from the chief commissioner."

The man moved to the signal. Another voice thundered in his ears. He turned swiftly around. The Irishman's red head had appeared at the top of the staircase. "Drop that signal or I'll blow you into bits," he shouted.

The operator hesitated, dazed. "Walk towards me," Gallagher shouted. "Look here, you guy, this will show you whether I'm in earnest or not!"

A bullet passed within a few inches of the operator's head. He came slowly across the room. Below they could hear the roar of the freight.

"This ain't your job," the Irishman continued savagely. "We want the cop, and we're going to have him."

Quest had stolen a yard or two nearer during this brief colloquy. Gallagher's mate from behind shouted out a warning just a second too late. With a sudden kick, Quest sent the revolver flying across the room and before the Irishman could recover he struck him full in the face. Notwithstanding his huge size and strength, Gallagher reeled. The operator who had just begun to realize what was happening flung himself bodily against the two thugs. A shot from the tangled mass of struggling limbs whistled past Quest's head as he sprang to the window which overlooked the track. The freight had already almost passed. Quest steadied himself for a supreme effort, crawled out on the little steel bridge and poised himself for a moment. The last car was just beneath. The gap between it and the previous one was slipping by. He set his teeth and jumped on the smooth top.

Back behind the tower Red Gallagher and his mate bent with horrified faces over the body of the signalman. "What the hell did you want to plug him for?" the latter muttered. "He ain't in the show at all. You've done us, Red, he's cooked!"

Red Gallagher staggered to his feet. Already the horror of the murderer was in his face as he glanced furtively around. "I never meant to drop him," he muttered. "I got mad at seeing Quest get off. That man's a devil."

"What are we going to do?" the other demanded hoarsely. "There's the auto," Gallagher shouted. "Come on, old man! I can fix the wheel. If we've got to swing for this job, we'll have something of our own back first."

They crawled to the side of the road. Gallagher's rough, hairy fingers were still trembling, but they knew their job. In a few minutes the wheel was fixed. Clunally but successfully, the great Irishman turned the car around away from the city.

"She's a hummer," he muttered. "I'll make her go when we get the hang of it. Sit tight."

They drove clumsily off, gathering speed at every yard. Behind, in the shadow of the tower, the signalman lay dead. Quest, half way to New York, stretched flat on his stomach, was struggling for life with knees and hands and feet.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Rheinholdt welcomed the inspector with a beaming smile as he stepped out of his office and approached her automobile.

"How nice of you to be so punctual, Mr. French," she exclaimed, making room for him by her side. "Will you tell the man to drive to Y? Quest's house in Georgia square?"

The inspector obeyed and took his place in the luxurious limousine. "How beautifully punctual we are!" she continued, glancing at the clock.

"Inspector, I am so excited at the idea of getting my jewels back. Isn't Mr. Quest a wonderful man?"

"He's a clever chap, all right," the inspector admitted. "All the same, I'm rather sorry he wasn't able to lay hands on the thief."

"That's your point of view, of course," Mrs. Rheinholdt remarked. "I can think of nothing but having my diamonds back. I feel I ought to go and thank the professor for recommending Mr. Quest."

The inspector made no reply. Mrs. Rheinholdt was suddenly aware that she was becoming a little tactless.

"Of course," she sighed, "it is disappointing not to be able to lay your hands upon the thief. That is where I suppose you must find the interference of an amateur like Mr. Quest a little troublesome sometimes. He gets back the property, which is what the private individual wants, but he doesn't secure the thief, which is, of course, the real end of the case from your point of view."

"It's a queer affair about these jewels," the inspector remarked. "Quest hasn't told me the whole story yet. Here we are on the stroke of time!"

The car drew up outside Quest's house. The inspector assisted his companion to alight and rang the bell at the front door. There was a somewhat prolonged pause. He rang again.

"Never knew this to happen before," he remarked. "That sort of secretary-valet of Mr. Quest's—Ross Brown I think he calls him—is always on the spot." They waited for some time, there was still no answer to their summons. The inspector placed his ear to the keyhole. There was not a sound to be heard. He drew back, a little puzzled. At that moment his attention was caught by the fluttering of a little piece of white material caught in the door. He pulled it out. It was a fragment of white embroidery, and on it were several small stains. The inspector looked at them and looked at his fingers. His face grew suddenly grave.

"Seems to me," he muttered, "that there has been some trouble here. I shall have to take a liberty. If you'll excuse me, Mrs. Rheinholdt, I think it would be better if you waited in the car until I send out for you."

"You don't think the jewels have been stolen again?" she gasped.

The inspector made no reply. He had drawn from his pocket a little pass key and was fitting it into the lock. The door swung open. Once more they were both conscious of that peculiar silence, which seemed to have in it some unpleasant quality. He moved to the foot of the stairs and shouted:

"Hello! Anyone there?"

There was no reply. He opened the doors of the two rooms on the right-hand side, where Quest, when he was engaged in any widespread affair, kept a stenographer and a telegraph operator. Both rooms were empty. Then he turned towards Quest's study on the left-hand side. French was a man of iron nerve. No power on earth could have kept back the cry which broke from his lips.

A few feet away from the door was stretched the body of the secretary-valet. On the other side of the room, lying as though she had slipped from the sofa, her head fallen on one side in hideous fashion, was the body of Miss Quigg, the Salvation Army young woman. French set his teeth and drew back the curtains. In the clear light the disorder of the room was fully revealed. There had been a terrible struggle. Between whom? How?

There was suddenly a piercing shriek. The inspector turned quickly around. Mrs. Rheinholdt, who had disregarded his advice, was standing on the threshold.

"Inspector!" she cried. "What has happened? Oh, my God!"

She covered her face with her hands. French gripped her by the arm. At that moment there was the sound of an automobile stopping outside.

"Keep quiet for a moment," the inspector whispered in her ear. "Put yourself together, madam. Go to the other end of the room. Don't look at these things for a few moments and then get home as quick as you can." She obeyed him mutely, pressing her hands to her eyes, shivering in every limb. French, stood back inside the room. He heard the front door open, he heard Quest's voice outside. "Where the devil are you, Ross?"

There was no reply. The door was pushed open. Quest entered, followed by the professor and Craig. The inspector stood watching their faces. Quest came to a stand

still before he had passed the threshold. He looked upon the floor and he looked across to the sofa. Then he looked at French.

"My God!" he muttered. The professor pushed past. He had looked around the room, and gazed at the two bodies with an expression of blank and absolute terror. Then he fell back into Craig's arms.

"The poor girl!" he cried. "Horrible! Horrible! Horrible!"

"Know anything about this?" Quest asked quickly.

"Not a thing," the inspector replied. "We arrived, Mrs. Rheinholdt and I, at five minutes past twelve. There was no answer to our ring. I used my pass key and entered. This is what I found."

Quest stood over the body of his valet for a moment. The man was obviously dead. The inspector took his handkerchief and covered up the head. A few feet away was a heavy paper-weight.

"Killed by a blow from behind," French remarked grimly, "with that little affair. Look here!"

They glanced down at the girl. Quest's eyebrows came together quickly. There were two blue marks upon her throat where a man's thumbs might have been.

"The hands again," he muttered. The inspector nodded.

"Can you make anything of it?" "Not yet," Quest confessed. "I must think."

The inspector glanced at him curiously. "Where on earth have you been to?" he demanded.

"Down to?" Quest repeated. "Look in the mirror!" French suggested.

Quest glanced at himself. His collar had given way, his tie was torn, a button and some of the cloth had been wrenched from his coat, his trousers were torn and he was covered with dust.

"I'll tell you about my trouble a little later on," he replied. "Say, can't we keep those girls out?"

They were too late. Laura and Lenora were already upon the threshold. Quest swung round toward them.

"Girls," he said, "there has been some trouble here. Go and wait up stairs, Lenora, or sit in the hall."

"The next day after dinner Mrs. Shirk was wiping the dishes and wetting 'em again with her tears when the boss came to the door and said:

"Mrs. Shirk, we've got down to where there's oil, but it's not a flowin' well. It has to be pumped up."

"The Shirk family was in a more tantalizing position than before. There was oil at the bottom of a well but no means of getting it up. It couldn't be seen or tasted, but it was there. Some pumpin' himself. Weeks passed, and the family was high on to stars in. One night a big storm came up, a regular cloudburst, and when mornin' come a creek that had run a mile from the Shirk farm had been turned from its channel and was running over a hundred yards from the house. Mrs. Shirk took on lamentin' that the oil must run right over the oil well and they'd never get nothin' but water, which it Tommy, who was a cheerful fellow, then without cusses always is tried to console her, but there wasn't no use, so he said he'd go and see about it. Perty soon he come back and said to his wife:

"'Thee, the creek is a runnin' right by the well, not over it.'"

"Well, then," she answered, "if you've got a spark o' energy left you'll go to work, pump out some oil, sell it and git us somethin' to eat."

"I got a better scheme in that," he said. "I don't want to hear none o' your schemes, the Indian wife answers. 'I want to see some work.'"

"Wimmen hadn't no brains for schemes," said Tom, and he went away. "There was an old water wheel on the place, to which a former owner of the property had dug a water race and had run a saw. Tommy Shirk was too lazy to do any work himself, but he hired a man on tick to mend the wheel to his well. Then he went home and took down the pump and took it to the well too. He roped the pump to the water wheel which was turned by the stream. Just as the oil began to flow along comes Mrs. Shirk. Tom was restin' on his back, with his hat over his eyes, smokin' his pipe. His wife, not notice in the pumpin' and seein' Tom takin' it easy, began to fire words at him. Tom raised his hand without even liftin' his hat off his face and pointed at the pump throwin' out oil.

"That was the best time Mrs. Shirk ever spoke disrespectfully to her husband," she admitted that if he was lazy he had two redeeming points—brags and ingenuity. Tom connected his well with a pipe line that ran near by, and the oil ran merrily, Shirk charging it up at the market price per barrel. His well produced about twenty barrels a day, and even with oil at 50 cents a barrel he made about \$10 a day. Blimey he sunk another well and got another supply of oil about as large as the first. The same stream and water wheel and pump did the work, and Tom had only to make out a bill for \$20 where before he had made out one for \$10.

"Tom Shirk still smoked his pipe in the sun, with his hat over his eyes, but he usually does it on the porch of a fine house he has built on the spot where his cabin used to be. Mrs. Shirk has come to consider him a prodigy of genius, and they all git a lot o' good outen that oil well. When they want to go away they let the pump go on pumpin'. They works as well at night as in the day time.

"What I guess of this yarn is: Gimme the book and give the other fellow the energy."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

HOW A SHIRKER WON SUCCESS

Luck Proves Better Than Labor In One Case.

"This talk," said the lounge in the country store, "about hard work being at the bottom of big fortunes is all bosh. There's more fortunes started by savin' than hard work, more by rascality than by savin' and more by luck than either. Did I ever tell you about Tommy Shirk, the laziest man in the state? No? Well, I'll give it to you."

"Tommy married Phoebe Cutts and \$800. Tom had ten acres of land that wouldn't even grow blackberries. He puttered along tryin' to git somethin' outen it, or pretendin' to. Phoebe's wife's money had been eaten up this way of makin' a livin'. Tommy was a good deal cut up by it. He went off to a corner of his land that was overgrown with weeds and lay down to think it over. Gittin' his nose right down on the ground, he smelled kerosene. At first he thought some one had spilled it onto a lantern, but on diggin' up the dirt with his fingers he found that oil was oozin' from below, and the further he went down the more of it there was.

"Well, Tom went home. He told his wife that there was oil on the property. She laughed at him, but he took her to the spot and let her smell it. Tom took his spade with him, and made a hole an' proved to his wife's satisfaction that the oil came from below. She had \$1000 hid away in a stockin', and in less'n a month that money was goin' outen the stockin' just about as fast as a well was bein' sunk where the oil was oozin'. Mrs. Shirk was almost crazy, seen they kept borin' without gettin' oil, but she resolved to put it all in an' take whatever dose was at the end. One night she handed over the last dollar and had not struck oil.

"The next day after dinner Mrs. Shirk was wiping the dishes and wetting 'em again with her tears when the boss came to the door and said:

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(TO BE CONTINUED)

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POPULAR MECHANICS

Fires in Paint Barrels.

Many serious shop fires have had their origin in a paint barrel or tank used for dip painting. Such tanks or barrels occasionally take fire either spontaneously or through other causes, and when once in flame it is very difficult to extinguish it before damage is done. Water is useless, as it only spreads the burning paint; the ordinary fire extinguisher is in about the same class, and sand, while used by some with fair success, so fills the paint with grit and dirt as to render the entire batch unfit for further use. To put out a fire of this kind the American Machinist points out that a mixture of bicarbonate of soda and fine sawdust in about the proportion of ten pounds of bicarbonate to each bushel of sawdust has been found effective. The mixture is thrown into the burning tank and the cover replaced. The fire is almost instantly choked out by the heavy blanket of carbonic acid gas formed by the burning sawdust and sodium carbonate.

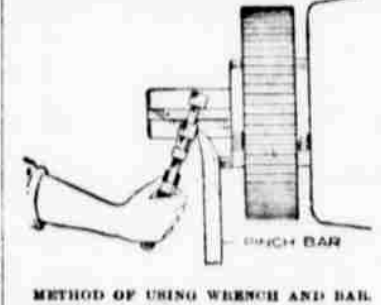
After the fire is out and the tank has cooled the charred sawdust dirt may be skimmed off the top, and the paint underneath will be found free from dirt and in as good condition as before the fire.

When Iron is Inflammable.

Iron burns freely under favorable conditions, though such a metal is not commonly thought of as combustible. A piece of soft iron when whirled into a flame burns brilliantly. A recently discovered process, termed by its inventor "colorization," said to protect combustible metals from atmospheric action at high temperatures and make them available for a much wider range of usefulness than is now the case, was recently described in the American Machinist. The metals are heated in revolving drums containing, among other things, finely divided aluminum, by which a surface alloy containing aluminum is produced. Pieces which because of their shape and size are not adapted for tumbling may be colorized by packing them in or painting them with a suitable mixture and heating them. After iron is colorized the effect of heating is slight. Instead of burning and the scale falling off, as in the case of untreated iron, practically no effect can be detected.

Removing Plain Keys.

Considerable skill is frequently required to remove plain keys fitted in places where it is impossible to get at them with a drift, says Popular Mechanics. One of the simplest successful methods of obtaining the desired result is the use of a monkey wrench and pinch bar, as shown in the illustration.



METHOD OF USING WRENCH AND BAR.

For this purpose a wrench

should be used that has sharp edges on its jaws, so those can get a good grip on the key. To further improve the method grooves may be cut on opposite sides of the key, so the jaws will fit better when straddling the key at a slight angle with the face of the keyed machine part. By using a pinch bar against the movable jaw sufficient force can be applied to remove the key unless it is so tightly driven or rusted in place that it will have to be drilled out before it can be released.

Repairing Marble.

With a little practice any mechanic can repair holes, cracks or chipped places on marble slabs, so that the patched place cannot be detected from the natural marble, says Popular Mechanics. Use the following mixture as a base filler: Water glass, ten parts; calcined magnesite, two parts; and powdered marble, four parts. These should be mixed thoroughly to a seal-dust paste. Fill the crack or hole and smooth off level; then, with a camel's hair brush and colors made of aniline in alcohol, work out the veins, body colors, etc., as near to the natural marble as possible. It will depend on the application of the colors whether the repair can be seen or not. Artificial marble slabs can be formed from this mixture.

Cleaning Before Painting.

The proper cleaning of the surface of iron and steel parts before paint or other protective materials are applied is of the utmost importance. Paint which is put on a surface covered with grease or dirt does not come into good contact with the metal and consequently does not adhere to it. Sooner or later the dirt will fall or be knocked off and the paint will come with it. Beams and other parts which are coated with heavy oil or which have been allowed to lie on the ground until they are covered with mud and dirt should be thoroughly cleaned before painting if it is desired that protection of any permanence is to be secured. Engineering Magazine.

Walnut Filler Ingredients.

A walnut filler is made of three pounds burnt Turkey turpentine, one pound of burnt Italian shenna, both ground in oil, then added to a pint with one quart of turpentine and one pint of Japan drier.

Chinese Beggar Chiefs.

At a Chinese wedding the "beggar chief" is always invited and brings a plate. He begs from all the guests, but in return keeps all other mendicants from the marriage feast. The beggar chief of a big Chinese city makes as much as \$15,000 a year, and out of this he pays the common or street beggars to keep away from social gatherings.

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